

Senate Panel Begins Voting on Arms-Pact Changes

By CHARLES MOHR
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 15 — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee today began considering modifications of the nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union and adopted two measures that opponents of the treaty dismissed as "cosmetic."

The committee nearly wandered into a diplomatic minefield by discussing the possibility of rewording the assurances from Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, on the bomber known in the West as the Backfire. But when Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, Democrat of Maryland, and the White House Counsel, Lloyd Cutler, pointed out the diplomatic dangers of such a demand, the committee agreed to postpone action on the Backfire bomber question.

In one vote today the committee voted 13 to 0 to make the "Agreed Statements and Common Understandings" that help define the terms and obligations of the treaty to be "of the same force and effect as the provisions of the treaty itself."

The Carter Administration said the reservation was unnecessary because the "statements and understandings," which were signed by President Carter and Mr. Brezhnev in Vienna last June, were "clearly binding." However, the White House did not oppose the step on the ground that it was unlikely that the Soviet Union would object.

Calls Vote 'Cosmetic'

Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, a Republican who opposes the treaty, said that "this is a cosmetic change if there ever was one." Senator Lugar suggested that supporters of the treaty may hope to make it appear they are "making constructive changes" in order to "cover yourself for a pro-SALT vote."

The committee also adopted, by a vote of 10 to 2, an "understanding" proposed by Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, which called for the joint statement of principles on negotiations for the next arms limitation treaty, agreed to by both nations but not submitted for ratification, be mentioned in the Senate's resolution as providing the "basis" for future negotiations.

Earlier, the committee seemed to come close to posing a serious difficulty for the treaty. The issue was an unsigned statement and an oral statement on the Backfire bomber given by Mr. Brezhnev to President Carter in Vienna in June. Together the statements indicated that the Soviet Union would not increase the annual production rate of the Backfire bomber beyond 30 planes and did not intend to give it intercontinental capability or extend its radius of range.

The motion was to pass a Senate understanding stating that the Brezhnev statements were a legally binding part of the treaty.

Seek to Clarify Brezhnev Statement

However, Senator John H. Glenn, Democrat of Ohio, pointed out that the Soviet Union had told the United States that it would not be bound by American interpretations of the Brezhnev statement. Several Senators then began to discuss changing the wording of the Brezhnev statement to "clarify" it.

Senator Sarbanes and the White House pointed out that the Soviet Union might object strongly to any Senate change in the wording of President Brezhnev's statement. Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, the Committee chairman, then announced that the motion was being withdrawn for "redrafting" and consideration at a later time.

Senators Walter D. Huddleston of Kentucky and Birch Bayh of Indiana, both Democratic members of the Intelligence Committee, introduced a reservation to the treaty that would require the Presi-

dent to report to the Senate every six months on how the treaty was being verified, on Soviet practices that effect verification and on possible treaty violations.

The committee leadership is expected to be able to stave off passage of the so-called "killer amendments" that would be likely to cause Moscow to reject it.